

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Travel & Explore

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SECTION T

Hannagan Meadow Lodge: Vacation home where the wildlife roam

Story and photos
by Nancy Clark-Puffer
Special for The Republic

If you'd like to plan a working vacation at Hannagan Meadow Lodge, forget it.

The lodge has no place to connect your laptop to the Internet, no cellphone reception, and only one pay phone, off the main lobby.

Guests at Hannagan Meadow Lodge watch for wildlife at sunset. Elk, bobcats, deer and even bears are likely to pay visits to the meadow on the other side of U.S. 191.

ARIZONA TRIP

More importantly, you wouldn't want something like work to spoil this little slice of heaven on the scenic Coronado Trail, near the Arizona-New Mexico line.

This place is all about relaxation. You won't even find a TV. But that's not a problem, because there are so many ways to enjoy the outdoors that you'll be hard-pressed to do everything in one weekend.

At 9,100 feet, the lodge is nestled against a sweeping

meadow in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests about 22 miles south of Alpine. On our first night, we watched a bobcat frolic in the tall grass. About an hour later, 10 elk moved in to graze. Guests with binoculars lined the front porch and driveway, being careful not to scare the creatures away. The only sounds were of the elk calling and a breeze whispering through the pines.

My friend and I stayed in the historic main lodge, where visitors can choose

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Trail-riding operation an exciting addition for lodge

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from eight bed-and-breakfast rooms. There also are 10 rustic cabins. The lodge, which opened in 1926, was remodeled seven years ago, when private baths were added to every room. Our accommodations were clean and comfortable, with a nice view of the meadow. We got to know the friendly, hard-working staff members, who went out of their way to make sure we were satisfied. They were shorthanded, but service did not suffer.

We spent our first day hiking the popular KP Trail #93, a few miles from the lodge, where we descended 2.4 miles into a lush canyon. At the end of the trail, two creeks converge, creating a scenic spot for lunch. We didn't linger long, though. Storm clouds gathered and thunder rumbled overhead, so we started our climb out. It sprinkled for the first mile or so of our return trip, but the rain was refreshing.

However, we were caught off-guard when the storm began to pelt us with pea-size hail. We darted, cold and soaking wet, from tree to tree for the last mile until we



Photos by Nancy Clark-Puffer/Special for The Republic

The Hannagan Meadow Lodge has welcomed visitors since 1926. It now offers a restaurant, eight bed-and-breakfast rooms in the main lodge, and 10 private, rustic cabins.

reached our car.

After a long, hot shower at the lodge, we enjoyed telling everyone our hail story at the dinner table that night. The beer flowed freely as we got to know some of the other visitors, including a fellow named Brian Wilson, who lives nearby and makes his living by creating antler furniture, chandeliers and the like.

The next morning, we took

a horseback ride. The staff was excited about a new trail-riding operation, which opened at the lodge the weekend before our visit.

"It's been real popular," said Diane Service, who manages the lodge with her husband, Craig. "People ask all the time about the horses, and we finally got them here last weekend."

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IF YOU GO

Hannagan Meadow Lodge

GETTING THERE: The lodge is about 265 miles east of downtown Phoenix. Take Interstate 10 east to U.S. 60. Head east through Globe, the Salt River Canyon and Show Low to Springerville, then go south on U.S. 191 (the Coronado Trail). The lodge is about 22 miles south of Alpine, near mile marker 232.

LODGING: Eight B&B rooms, \$70 to \$150 per night from May through October. Ten rustic cabins, \$85 to \$175 per night from May through October. Rates are lower in winter.

DINING: The restaurant serves breakfast, lunch and dinner on weekends, and breakfast and dinner during the week. Sack lunches are available at the general store, which also sells gas, snacks, drinks and souvenirs.

THINGS TO DO: Horseback rides are available, mountain bikes can be rented, and there are hundreds of miles of hiking trails nearby.

DETAILS: 1-(928)-428-2225 or www.hannaganmeadowlodge.com

ARIZONA TRIP from T8

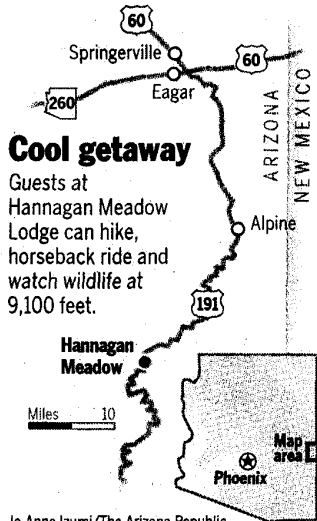
The trail guide, Justin Lee, took great care of us, leading us through beautiful meadows and dense forests while sharing knowledge of the area's history and wildlife. The horses were easy to manage, and the ride was well worth the \$35-per-hour fee.

Although the lack of TVs, computers and phones may not appeal to some, it provided us a much-needed respite. We relished the lack of noise, the rural, rustic feel and the cool, clean air.

"There's the hiking trails, mountain bikes, horseback riding or just sitting and reading a book, but some people get bummed because we don't have TVs," Service said.

Instead of flipping channels, most visitors find the best viewing to be of the meadow at sunup and sundown, when elk, deer, bobcats and bears are the stars. Some people set up lawn chairs at dusk to watch what nature has in store.

Many families hold reunions at the lodge. For younger children, there is a small play area on the second floor of the lodge and a large sandbox outside. Older kids can play horseshoes, ride bikes or go horseback riding with an adult. Nearby lakes



Cool getaway

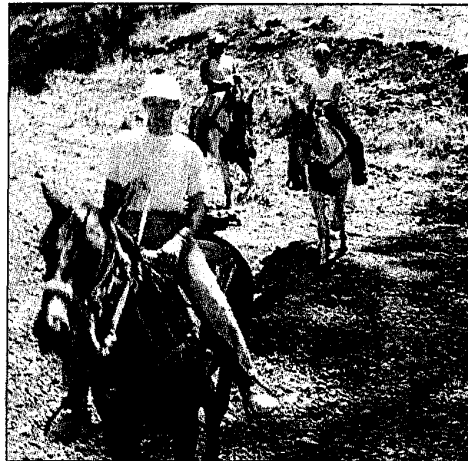
Guests at Hannagan Meadow Lodge can hike, horseback ride and watch wildlife at 9,100 feet.

Jo Anne Izumi/The Arizona Republic

offer quiet places for fishing. Service brought her grandchildren up for the summer, just like, she said, the original innkeepers did.

"We're carrying on the tradition. Our grandkids are here," she said. "I love the old rustic mystique of it all. I like the history of it, the fact that it's been around for a long time; to think about all the people that have come and gone and how things have changed."

Nancy Clark-Puffer is a local writer and photographer. She can be reached at Nancy_Puffer@yahoo.com.



Justin Lee (above), the trail guide at the lodge, saddles horses for a morning ride through wilderness, meadows and dense forests. The lodge, in Arizona's eastern White Mountains, opened its own trail-riding operation in mid-June.